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ABSTRACT

This informational booklet discusses the history and concept of technical committees in vocational education and some critical elements of their operation. The first part considers the legislative provision and substantive implications that flow from it. The function and establishment of committees, determination of which occupational areas should have a committee, and significant characteristics of technical committees are addressed. The second part describes potential benefits of such committees. Six specific benefits to the vocational system are discussed: creation of understanding and commitment to vocational education, provision of a viable forum for exchanging ideas affecting human resource development, confirmation or validation of existing skill inventories, development of a network, relationship to local craft councils, and application of technical committees to other sections of the Perkins Act. The final part of the publication focuses on business participation. It addresses such concerns as what business will ask for, which business people have knowledge to share, and where the right individuals can be found. (YLB)

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TECHNICAL COMMITTEES:

FROM CONCEPT TO ACTION

SEPTEMBER 1986

The Center for Vocational Education-Business Cooperation is a joint project of the National Vocational Education Professional Development Consortium of the State Directors of Vocational Education and the National Alliance of Business. Its goal is to build a stronger working relationship among employers, vocational education and employment and training organizations.

For more information, contact Steven Pines, Director, Center for Vocational Education-Business Cooperation, c/o National Alliance of Business, 1015 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, Telephone (202) 289-2916.

The National Alliance of Business is an independent, business-led, non-profit corporation whose mission is to increase private sector training and job opportunities for the economically disadvantaged and the long-term unemployed by building and strengthening public/private partnerships of business, government, labor, education, and community-based organizations.

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Dear Colleague:

With the passage of Carl D. Perkins Act in 1984, a new chapter in the operation of vocational education began. The Act brings into sharp focus at least three major trends: (1) it continues the operational shift for human resource development from the federal level to state offices; (2) it proposed to bring about a stronger, more comprehensive vocational education delivery system which complements and supports other human resource development efforts; and, (3) it promotes a major new role for business by expanding its function within the internal operations of the vocational education enterprise.

The implementation of this new role provides the basis for this publication. Specificially, the Perkins Acts mandates that vocational educators involve business people in developing model occupational curricula through technical committees. Vocational educators from across the country desire ideas and examples of best practices for implementing technical committees, to avoid duplication of effort and operate them effectively. In order to meet these expressed needs, the National Alliance of Business' Center for Vocational Education-Business Cooperation, in concert with the East Central Network for Curriculum Coordination and the National Network for Curriculum Coordination in Vocational and Technical Education, are preparing a series of informational booklets:

- **Technical Committees - From Concept to Action**
  This publication discusses the history and concept of technical committees and some critical elements of their operation.
- **Technical Committees - State of the Art**
  This publication will summarize the results of a survey of state personnel responsible for the conduct of committees, in particular, state liaison representatives, regarding current implementation and administrative practices.
- **Models for Effective Technical Committees**
  This publication will be collection of tested operational and administrative procedures for implementing Technical Committees. It will be based upon the experiences of 3-5 states who will contribute their analyses and insightes.

We, at the Alliance, are particularly pleased to present the first of this series, since it lays out the conceptual framework for a greater private sector role in the design and implementation of vocational education programs. Vocational education plays a critical role in the employability development of our nation's young people, not only through occupational skills training, but through important work-readiness preparation. A student's successful transition to the workforce will depend upon his or her academic competencies coupled with work maturity, and vocational education has shown that it can be responsive to this goal.

Please do not hesitate to call upon Steven Pines (201/289-2916), Center Director, to learn more about our activities in this area.

Sincerely,

W. H. Kolberg

William H. Kolberg
President

FOREWORD

Partnerships evolve for many different reasons, and the synergism of such alliances often produce outcomes far in excess of that which was possible through independent action. This publication, the first in a three-part series, is an example of a successful partnership, both on an organizational level and through the combined energies of certain people. It began with the Professional Development Consortium of the National Association of State Directors of Vocational Education providing a grant to the National Alliance of Business creating the Center for Vocational Education-Business Cooperation. The development of technical committee is a key activity of the Center. The East Central Network for Curriculum Coordination then lent its expertise in curriculum development and exchange to this project and provided the critical technical focus and outreach. And, of course, the National Alliance of Business, which houses the Center for Vocational Education/Business Cooperation has made a substantial long-term commitment to enhance business involvement in vocational education, with technical committees forming an important link.

Of course institutional partnerships would be vastly incomplete without key individuals who really make the enterprise work. At the East Central network, Rebecca Douglass and Ruth Patton have made an important commitment to the project and in the process, NAB has made good new friends. Dr. Addison Hobbs, President of the National Vocational Education Professional Development Association, who deserves special recognition for creating the Center and encouraging its work on behalf of technical committees. And no publication could exist without its author. Dr. Ralph Bregman deserves high praise for, first conceiving, and then implementing this multi-product activity. Along the way, Ralph has shown a clear vision of what technical committees could be and how vocational education and job training systems could better complement each other. In the process, a lasting professional association has been formed.

Steven Pines
Director, Center for Vocational Education-
Business Cooperation

September 1986

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A basic principle of effective vocational education policy and program design is the involvement of business. In fact, this became a formal standard of operation in 1917. The vehicle for business participation was generally through local craft advisory committees - volunteer entities advising on specific occupational areas. More recently, the business community recognized that rapid changes are occurring in the workplace, but not in the schools, and concluded that more active involvement on its part was needed.

Several business groups, including the National Alliance of Business participated in legislative discussions in 1983 and 1984--the most recent period of reauthorization of vocational education legislation. NAB provided the leadership in consolidating views by proposing Technical Committees as a viable and legitimate format for business participation; the committees established by the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America were used as a model. Both houses of Congress immediately recognized the potential, with the Senate writing the concept into the activities of the National Council on Vocational Education while the House authorized states to establish technical committees. In conference, both constructs were approved and became provisions of the Perkins Act.

Legislative Provision and Related Observations

The Act

The legislation states:

> Each state board, in consultation with the state council, shall establish a limited number of technical committees to advise the council and the board on the development of model curricula to address state labor market needs. Technical committees shall develop an inventory of skills that may be used by the state board to define state-of-the-art model curricula. Such inventory will provide the type and level of knowledge and skills needed for entry, retention, and advancement in occupational areas taught in the state. (Title I, Part B, Sec. 111(3)(d)).

Key Inferences

At least five substantive implications flow from the legislative provision:

- The private sector through committee membership is given a high-profile, tangible role in the operation of vocational education.

- Most significant, is the focus on is employer and labor representatives to increase their participation and agree on skill competencies needed in a particular occupation, at a particular level, and communicate that need to the vocational education community through technical committees--a device long familiar to vocational educators, known as advisory committees.

- o While advisory in nature, technical committees can affect a broad range of curricula and instructional activities.

- o As states define and then implement model curricula, program standards and evaluation criteria are likely to become more uniform and substantial.

- o A curriculum and materials exchange will evolve, providing an interstate and intrastate information network for state and local agencies.

Function of Committees - What the Committees Do

Technical committees are a unique construct of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act (PL 98-524). Each committee develops an inventory of skills for an occupation or occupational area taught in the state. The inventory may be used to define the contents of a model curriculum.

Establishment of Committees

Each state board of vocational education, in consultation with the state council, shall establish a limited number of technical committees. The 1985 regulations (Section 401.12) state that at least two (2) technical committees must be created as set forth in the state plan for vocational education. Also, the state board establishes procedures for membership, operation, and duration of the committees consistent with the purposes of the Act.

Membership is composed of representatives of:

(1) employers from any relevant industry or occupation for which the committee is established

(2) trade or professional organizations representing the relevant occupations

(3) organized labor, where appropriate

Committees will benefit from and should have the services of an educator with expertise in that occupation, who is recognized as an excellent instructor or curriculum expert. The business representatives will need the advice of such an individual to help them translate their knowledge and concerns into a form usable by curriculum developers and instructors.

Deciding on an Occupational Area(s)

The state board and the state council together determine which occupational area(s) should have a technical committee. Such a decision could be based on one or more of the following factors:

- Consensus about how contemporary the current programs are. (Some information on the degree of modernization needed could be developed at public hearings or from annual program evaluations.)

- An assessment as to which programs will support the economic development needs of the state while meeting the needs of those industries the state is trying to nurture or attract. (Labor-market information from the state occupational information coordinating council would be extremely useful here.)

- A need for better articulation within the vocational education structure.

- A desire to create new programs to prepare students for emerging occupations.

- Expressions of interest coming from business, trade associations, or labor. (Input from the private sector is particularly important regarding new or emerging technology or occupations.)

Significant Characteristics of Technical Committees

Several features of technical committees highlight their importance:

- Technical committees represent, for the first-time, a designation of individuals from the private sector to be part of the state's administrative structure. While states are not compelled to use the products of technical committee efforts, they must establish a limited number of such committees.

- The nature of technical committee membership reinforces Congress' intention to expose the vocational structure directly to input from the business community.

- Membership on technical committees complements the roles of the business community on state councils on vocational education, the National Council on Vocational Education, and related JTPA councils, such the State Job Training Coordinating Councils and Private Industry Councils.

- The establishment of technical committees and the subsequent use of their products can help satisfy other requirements of the Perkins Act. For example, the National Assessment (Sec. 403 of PL 98-524) is expected to evaluate the skill and competency levels developed by states for purposes of measuring program effectiveness. Thus, states can demonstrate to the National Assessment how the skill inventories developed by technical committees are used to help measure program effectiveness as required in Sec. 113 (b)(9)(A) of the law.

Technical committee can help reinforce findings from research on vocational education. Recent research has provided insight to the economic benefits of program participation, including:

(1) High school graduates with no additional education who have a concentration (3 or more credits) in vocational education tend to experience greater participation in the labor force, longer periods of participation in the labor force, fewer weeks of unemployment, and higher annual incomes than those with no or limited participation. (From N.L. McCaslin in "Outcomes Assisted with Participation in Secondary Vocational Education," National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1984.)

(2) Of all high school graduates, those with a concentration in vocational education and employed in jobs related to their program had significantly higher hourly and weekly earnings than other high school graduates with no vocational education, including academic students. (From Paul B. Campbell and others in "Outcomes of Vocational Education for Women, Minorities, The Handicapped, and The Poor," National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986.)

The two key factors which emerge from the data are amount or concentration of subject matter taken and relatedness of job to education or training programs. Both factors can be significantly influenced by technical committee's analysis and advice.

The establishment of technical committees formalizes mutual accountability. While vocational education should prepare competent, skilled workers, the business community must concisely set forth its employment requirements. If this is done properly, the education system will be in a more confident posture when defending itself against criticism for teaching obsolete skills.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

What Can Come of Such Committees?

Is it worth it? How do technical committees fit with other components of the education - training system?

Technical committees should not exist in isolation. Their value resides in their contribution to an overall plan for program improvement. Even those states that have statewide craft committee or other mechanisms for constructing task lists could benefit from implementing technical committees. Several specific benefits to the vocational system could evolve from these committees:

A. Creating a sharper knowledge base in, and commitment to, vocational education by interest groups who are poised to organize political support, pre-and in-service training, donation or loan of equipment, and joint vocational programs.

B. A working forum for both educators and employers to discuss human resource development issues including specific academic and functional work competencies.

C. At a minimum, confirmation/validation of existing skill inventories, including type and level of knowledge and skills required for job entry, retention, or career advancement.

D. A viable network for sharing curriculum information.

E. A larger frame of reference incorporating private sector input for local craft and advisory committees.

F. A list of skills which can be transposed into competency statements to carry out several other requirements of the law.

Each of these benefits are discussed more fully on the following sections.

A. Creation of Understanding and Commitment to Vocational Education

A major thesis of this report is that technical committees provide, for the "first time," a formal access of vocational/edcuation to business. While some might argue that such a structure is needed because vocational education has not been responsive to the needs of business, a better explanation is that the speed and dynamics of economic change require new working relationships. As these relationships mature and bonding takes place, commitment of support logically follows.

If vocational educators help those in the business community understand what the enterprise can do, should do, and wants to do, then business people will be able to understand and think more thoughtfully about program plans, concerns, and needs. A strong vocational training system requires a partnership with business who may provide opportunities to update instructors; find ways to modernize programs; make specialized supplies and curricula available; analyze other aspects of the program, such as equipment and facility needs, teacher competencies, and entrepreneurial opportunities; and provide the political support needed to increase resources at the state and local levels.

B. Provision of a Viable Forum for Exchanging Ideas Affecting Human Resource Development

Technical committees provide a unique opportunity to promote discussions on the relationship between economic development and human resource development; the formulation of new institutional linkages to facilitate more responsive program delivery; the pending impact of demographic changes on vocational programs and services; and the establishment of equipment and material pools. Businesses can reasonably be expected to make available their research and planning resources to further these discussions. The shift in dialogue is profound, moving from the here-and-now issues to strategic workplace concerns on the horizon.

C. Confirmation or Validation of Existing Skill Inventories

The technical committee, in most cases, would analyze tasks or duties. This responsibility could be carried out through DACUM (Developing A Curriculum), Structured Group Interview, or other processes for curriculum development. When an occupation emerges that is new to the state, a technical committee might serve for an extended period of time and provide a more detailed job analysis and identification of new skill requirements. The Act does not stipulate time frames for the development of lists of skills/competencies.

After validating a skills inventory, a technical committee could be asked to look at other aspects of the program. Whatever tasks are performed, however, should be within and contribute to a larger plan for program improvement.

D. Development of a Network

One of the most intriguing aspects of technical committees is the opportunity to make use of the extensive programmatic resources currently available, while graphically demonstrating to business the training capacity of the vocational enterprise. Some of the sources of curriculum information which might comprise a network are:

- the National Network for Curriculum Coordination (six centers);
- the Mid-America Vocational Curriculum Consortium;
- the Vocational Technical Education Consortium of States;
- the vocational instructional program advisory committees (VIP, craft committees);
- the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (for curricula from the military and other Resources), and
- the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation, the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute, state curriculum labs, and other like organizations.

The network could be used in several ways. For instance, when a technical committee convenes it can ask the various organizations (e.g., National Network, Mid-America Vocational Consortium, and appropriate vocational instructional program committees) to provide curricula, including skills and knowledge taught for each level of a particular occupational area. This material can then be used as background information to help facilitate the analysis and identification/verification of skills and competencies.

In this regard, the DACUM process, sponsored by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, provides a tested formal approach to occupational analysis. The analysis results in a detailed identification or verification of skills and competencies by levels required in an occupation. In many cases, DACUM, or an alternative such as the Structured Group Interview, along with the curriculum materials, can be used to refine the output of the committee. (The Structured Group Interview for curriculum verification has recently been successfully tested in Illinois by the East Central Network for Curriculum Coordination.)

An additional benefit can accrue to vocational education. While the committees are in the process of developing their model curricula, vocational personnel can inform business and labor members about the system's resources and capacity. To the degree that business becomes more informed, its respect for and commitment to vocational education is likely to increase. Business will benefit itself by obtaining, through the network, curriculum materials for in-house staff development. As a linking mechanism, the ultimate value of technical committees cannot be over estimated.

Further, once the technical committee has completed its assignment, the products can be disseminated to various network components. In particular, VIP committees might want to re-examine the curriculum used in the local program by comparing it to the technical committee's analysis. Other states will also make use of such products, avoiding unnecessary duplication of development. After a few years, a library can be formed with model curricula (including the names of technical committee members as a resource) available through the six centers of the National Network for Curriculum Coordination. Program improvement efforts surely will shift from what is taught, to who is taught, how and to what end.

Other groups that should be brought into the network are: commercial curriculum vendors; business associations (e.g., the National Tooling and Machining Association develops curriculum materials for member use at state and local levels), labor organizations, business training departments, and Private Industry Councils (PICs). Expanded relationships with Private Industry Councils should be a priority for vocational educators. These councils represent a unique, untapped resource for curriculum information.

The Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 established national performance standards for evaluating PICs which manage programs serving economically disadvantaged youth (ages 16-21) and adults. In addition to job placement, another performance standard is the positive termination rate for youth where credit is given if a youth successfully completes a major level of education, enlists in the military, or completes a youth employment competency.

Each Private Industry Council approves specific employment competencies that youth participating in training programs are expected to achieve. That is, if

youth attain competencies from one of three areas of skills, then the local program administrator can count that attainment toward satisfying their annual performance goals (established from the national performance standards). The three competency areas are pre-employment/work maturity, basic education, and job-specific skills. Positive terminations can be claimed for youth that demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the PIC, proficiency in one or more of these three competency areas.

Therefore, PICs represent a viable source of competency information not only for the technical committees, but also for local vocational instructional program committees. Conversely, results from technical committees activities can aid local PICs which are developing their list of acceptable competencies for each of the three areas. Here again, the National Curriculum Network might become a repository for such information to be made available both on an intra-and interstate basis. The more sharing among states, the greater the likelihood that vocational students will be more mobile--their repertoire of skills readily accepted by the business community across the country.

E. Relationship to Local Craft Councils

Technical committees are not a substitute for local craft councils, also known as vocational instructional program advisory committees. These local bodies are a valuable asset to strengthening vocational education, but they could be further enhanced through efforts of the technical committees.

By virtue of their membership, technical committees provide information drawn from a broad spectrum of an industry which local committees can use to determine the specific guidance provided to local instructors. This broad spectrum information system also allows local educators to know whether their program is designed not only to meet local employer needs, but also to prepare students for the jobs industry-wide.

F. Application of Technical Committee to Other Sections of the Perkins Act

The Act contains several requirements for which technical committees can provide positive input. That is, information developed by these committees can reasonably be used by the state to satisfy other legislative requirements in addition to providing directions for improving the delivery of vocational education. For example, technical committees can advise on or provide resources for those sections of the Act cited here:

TITLE I, Sec. 113(a)(3) -- Among the required evaluation to which the technical committee could contribute are:

(A) the assessment of the current and projected occupational needs and the current and projected demand for general occupational skills within the state;

(D) assessment of the quality of vocational education in terms of:

(i) the pertinence of programs to the workplace and to new and emerging technologies;

(ii) the responsiveness of programs to the current and projected needs in the state;

(iii) the capacity of programs to facilitate entry into and participation in vocational education and to ease the school-to-work and secondary to post-secondary transition;

(iv) the technological and educational quality of vocational curricula, equipment and instructional materials to enable vocational students and instructors to meet the challenges of increased technological demands of the workplace;

(v) the capability of vocational programs to meet the needs for general occupational skills and improvement of academic foundations in order to address the changing content of jobs.

(E) determining the capacity of local education agencies to deliver the vocational education services necessary to meet the needs identified through the assessments required above.

Sec. 113(b)(9)(A) -- Here, technical committees could be used to confirm the competencies needed for different levels of employment:

Each plan should provide assurances that the state will develop measures for the effectiveness of programs assisted under this Act ... including evaluation measurements such as:

(ii) the levels of skills to be achieved in particular occupations, which will reflect the hiring needs of employers.

(iii) the basic employment competencies to be used in performance outcomes which will reflect the hiring needs of employers.

Sec. 201(h)(2) and Sec. 251(a)(22) -- As employers and representatives of employers, technical committee members could alert vocational educators to the opportunities anticipated:

Arrangements that might be made with private vocational training institutions, private post-secondary educational institutions and employers whenever such institutions, or employers can make a significant contribution to obtaining the objectives of the state plan by providing substantially equivalent training at a lesser cost, or equipment or services not available in public institutions.

TITLE II, Part A, Sec. 201(i)(1 and 2) -- Technical committee memers could conceivably offer or identify:

Vocational education services, including work-site programs such as cooperative vocational education, work-study, apprenticeship, and placement services.

TITLE II, Part B, Sec. 251(3)(6)(21) and (23) -- Technical committee could provide information or resources leading to:

The creation or expansion of programs to train workers in skilled occupations needed to revitalize businesses and institutions or to promote entry of business into the state. Improvement or expansion of programs and related services to include upgrading of employed or unemployed workers and workers who may become unemployed as a result of industrial dislocation.

Acquisition of high-technology equipment and telecommunications equipment.

TITLE IV, Part C, Sec. 422(a)(3) -- Technical committees can serve as a resource for:

Studies to be conducted by the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee on the effects of technological change on new and existing occupational areas and required knowledge and job skills.

Part D, Sec. 431(e)(g) -- Information from technical committees could be basic to:

The use of results of findings on types and levels of occupational competencies necessary for entry and sustained employment identified by working groups convened by the National Council on Vocational Education, and reported to each state council on vocational education.

BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

What Will Business Ask For?

The question has been raised: Don't business and labor people want students with narrow, but well-developed skills, and practiced so they can walk in and perform a job well. Experience with business people does not lead to such a conclusion. A reading of several of the National Reports on Education, on which employers served and led, shows that employers want a sound basic education of reading, writing, computation, interpersonal and communication skills, and basic economics. Additionally, students should be able to analyze, synthesize, make distinctions and decisions, including those related to ethical questions.

In the case of vocational education, students are expected to be able to function in a paid occupation. That is, the individual should be productive, having also mastered employability and job-specific skills. Moreover, students should acquire an entrepreneurial spirit that will lead to promotion. Such students are not produced through narrow training programs, only through rich vocational/occupational education efforts.

Which Business People Have Knowledge To Share?

In every industry, dedicated professionals exist who lead their peers in thinking about how jobs get done, how they should be done, and what it takes to do them. These people are everywhere--from foreman, manufacturing representative, plant manager, and service manager to trade association staff. Sometimes a small business owner has the direct knowledge of the hierarchy of duties and tasks required in order to perform successfully.

The important task is to find the people who really know how the work is done and how it is developing, who know about the emerging methods and technologies. They are the incumbent employees of the occupational area being studied. Also, many such knowledgeable people work for industry associations. More than 5,000 trade associations are estimated to exist nationwide. This resource should be tapped.

Where Can the Right Individuals Be Found?

Go where business people go for information about specific industries. Go where business people are organized to improve themselves and to act in their own economic interest: to the specific trade associations which are represented in the state. The members and staff there, once they understand what is expected, will be willing to find good people who really what the needs of the industry and can state them.

An association staff person could be asked to serve on the committee, as well as suggest others. Likewise, labor unions should be consulted with regard to who in their organization or management should be asked. They should be encouraged to identify key incumbents. If the industry respects the people on the committee, a high degree of interest and support for the effort to work more closely with the vocational education systems will be achieved.

Of course, recruitment of technical committee members is not limited to trade associations. Members can be recruited through and, where appropriate, from local vocational instructional program advisory committees (also known as craft advisory committees). They can also be recruited directly from: business/industry, economic development agencies, the military, or government, and, other kinds of business groups (e.g., state and local chambers of commerce, associations of training directors, and private industry councils).

One method for identifying potential sources of incumbents is to examine state data on what size companies are hiring vocationally prepared students. New Jersey is currently using this method.

The effort to identify and recruit members will be greatly aided if an effort has been made to get well-respected business leaders on the state council on vocational education. Furthermore, trade associations, businesses, and labor unions could be asked to provide people by a high-ranking person in the state: the governor or the chair of the state board of vocational education - preferably both. For example, the governor could notify the trade associations of this new opportunity and ask them to think through with their membership whether a technical committee is needed for their industry. Those associations which want more information and want to see technical committees created for certain occupations, should be directed to contact the State Director of Vocational Education. This will immediately bring the agency into contact with business leaders who have or are developing a serious interest in education. If handled well, and if helped to think through whether a committee should be created, such people can become knowledgeable and vocal supporters of vocational education.

CONCLUSION

Technical committees provide a unique focus and network for curriculum integration (a) within the state's vocational education structure; and (b) between the education and training systems. If a legitimate end of vocational education is the kind of curriculum that translates into occupational skills and competencies, then the technical committee is an effective means to that end.

Additionally, technical committees provide a structure to channel the input of business and industry. Volunteers from the private sector often desire a focused agenda (free of bureacratic red tape) to which they may provide feedback. NAB has found the business community to be willing and effective partners. They, on the other hand, require good staff to maximize their limited time away from their business.

Education and training for the workplace is a serious national enterprise and will be an on-going need to keep pace with shifts in technology. Core academic competencies will have to be mastered to ensure that workers maintain their ability to be trained and retrained. Business and government must invest heavily in human capital development to ensure America's future competitiveness and vehicles such as technical committees or private industry councils appear to be viable mechanisiams.

It is worthwhile noting that after the first presentation of this paper in July 1986; vocational leadership personnel placed several of the ideas on their national agenda. Serious consideration is now being given to establishing a national information network.

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